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Pedagogical Conditions for Role-Playing Game Development in Senior Preschool Age Children

Maria Vinogradova^{a*}, Natalia Ivanova^a

*^aCherepovets state university, Institute of pedagogy and psychology,
5 Lunacharskiy st., Cherepovets, 162600, Russia*

Abstract

The article presents an approach to role-playing game development in senior preschoolers based on the problem-oriented analysis of a preschool child's playing space. Methods and techniques of plot enrichment and playing skill development have been identified by using interactive technologies and the individual differentiation approach. The key findings of technology implementation are related to positive dynamics in children's playing skill development, their need for peer communication and gratification and their desire for independence.

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1. Introduction

The current improvement of the preschool education system in compliance with the principles of humanization, individualization and cultural conformity has caused recognition of the inherent worth of the preschool age period and a shift from the pedagogy of teaching to the pedagogy of development aimed at child's subjective position development. In this regard the role of game as a preschool leading activity is on the increase.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-921-149-59-73

E-mail address: ms.vimary@mail.ru

J. Huizinga, S. Shmakov, L. Vygotsky, N. Mikhailenko, N. Korotkova and others make a point that children are attracted by the mystery of a game, the feeling that everything is within their control as well as the fact that when playing a game a child can act as an adult and imitate grown-ups' behavior. [1].

Many researchers – philosophers, educators, psychologists – such as H. Spencer, K. Groos, G. Stanley Hall, Z. Freud, H. Wallon, K. Ushinsky, S. Rubinstein, L. Vygotsky, G. Plekhanov and others thought about the essence and origin of play.

Russian pedagogy has accepted D. Elkonin's thesis about the social nature of a game. A role-playing game came into existence in the course of the historical development of society as a result of a shift of the child's place in the system of social relations. In this process the role-playing game has begun to function as a creative game in which children reflect events of the surrounding reality through role interaction [2].

Role-playing games are the leading activity of a preschool age child (L. Vygotsky, S. Rubinstein). [3].

It is the playing activity that promotes children's socialization, their orientation in human relationship, acquisition of first cooperative skills (D. Elkonin, A. Leontiev, L. Venger, L. Usova, A. Zaporozhets and others), moral and intellectual development (D. Elkonin, S. Novoselova, A. Zaporozhets and others). The process of preparing a child for school is implemented in the game and through it. Various games are an effective way of upbringing, teaching, development and correction.

It is important to note that at the present stage there are objective and subjective reasons why the role-playing game is being eliminated from a child's life and potential functions of game are being undermined. Children's games, especially role-playing games are unvaried in contents and plots. They are characterized by repetitious plots, the dominance of manipulations over imaginative reflection of the reality.

One of the main reasons for this situation is the destruction of the natural mechanism of game culture acquisition. Like any other human activity a role-playing game does not appear spontaneously. Children acquire games through immersion into the play environment. It occurs naturally when a preschool child is involved into communication between different age groups including children of several generations. However, at the present stage there is a strong tendency of decreased informal communication between different age groups at various stages of preschool child development. Another reason is a decrease in a child's activity in the acquisition of knowledge about the surrounding reality that is the basis for various game plots.

Unsystematic information about the world acquired by children via mass media and the lack of playing interaction experience with elder children who transfer playing actions, lead to a lower general standard of children's playing activities.

Therefore, at the present stage there is an objective necessity to find effective methods to develop preschool children's leading activity.

2. Method

The main objective of the experimental study is to determine the efficiency of pedagogical conditions integration with the traditional comprehensive method of role-playing game guidance and methodical support of preschool children's playing activities.

At the stage of summative assessment the following main problems of role-playing game development in 6-7 year-old children were identified:

1. Preschool children demonstrate a very limited variety of playing plots. In general, they perform standard plots without showing creative imagination. Children do not draw on their knowledge about society for creating plots;
2. Generally, children set 1-2 playing goals in a game which also impoverishes their game contents;
3. Playing actions with toys are also limited in variety, sometimes common manipulation takes place;
4. Role actions are unvaried, they are often imitative without using expressive means for conveying a playing image;

5. Role conversations do take place, but mostly in the form of role utterances as there is no rich content in role conversations;

6. Playing interaction is short in duration.

Playing activity development at each stage of the preschool age cannot be effective unless there is purposeful adult guidance. Without an educator's guidance preschool children's role-playing game can develop spontaneously, some game components such as role and playing actions as well as creativity will not be formed, and the game will lose its potentialities for preschool children development.

Game guidance is a whole set of methods and techniques directed to particular children games organization and their playing skills acquisition that call for an adult's direct involvement in the game.

Game regulation is a whole set of indirect influence methods and techniques to keep the nature of children's activity independent.

Playing activity organization is a process of playing activity construction which requires an adult's active participation in the game.

The traditional comprehensive approach to children's playing activity development presupposes direct social playing experience enrichment, playing skills development, creation of an object-playing environment and the use of direct and indirect guidance methods. новые способы реализации каждого компонента комплексного метода руководства игрой New methods of implementing each component of comprehensive game guidance were rationalized and tested during the experiment program.

Preschool children's social playing experience can be enriched by creating multimedia presentations (virtual tours) that give opportunities to inform children about various fields of adult life that are not available for children's direct observation – banking, beauty parlors, space stations, etc. Emotional influence of technical media, visual and audio images cause a child's emotional reaction that is very important for the perception of information. Through multimedia presentations children can get acquainted with video clips and photos of elder children's games which give an opportunity to transfer their playing experience.

In preparing multimedia presentations to be used as visual aids for social playing experience enrichment the following rules should be observed:

1. Video clips and images in a presentation should be combined with minimal text information;
2. Visual presentations should be accompanied by the teacher's emotional talk;
3. Presentations should reflect areas of human life that are difficult for children to get acquainted with in real conditions;
4. The length of a presentation should be 10-15 minutes of informative conversations with children;
5. The information should be comprehensible to children;
6. A presentation should not only serve as a means of informing children about the social reality but also help them to acquire social playing experience, i.e. it should provide information to a child about possibilities to reflect life in game attributes, in plots and playing actions;
7. A presentation should be arranged in such a way as to provide senior preschool children with an opportunity to combine different plot lines and thus to develop their ability to create plots;

Another effective condition for children's mutual social playing experience enrichment and playing skills development is organization of communication between age groups that helps a child to acquire various role positions in a game, its inner rules and particular aspects of interaction through observing games played by elder children who have more social and playing experience. Besides, communication between different age groups gives an opportunity for elder children to accept main roles that are more significant to them while younger children, who accept minor roles in the game, support the plot of the game and through immersion into the game environment they acquire playing experience.

One more condition for preschool children's playing activity development is the organization of an object-playing environment aimed to develop children's plot creation skills. For that purpose one can use play environment modeling through two-dimensional maps, three-dimensional plot models and a board theatre which children create together with a teacher. The aids collected can be kept in the room and used as an indirect reminder about a possibility to develop a plot line without an adult's direct participation which increases

children's participation autonomy in the game. A scaled-down version of social environment created by children through playing attributes or imaginative world objects will give children an opportunity to model the playing process and implement a variety of plots.

Besides, humanization of education presupposes implementation of an individual differentiation approach that can be presented in the organization of preschool children playing activity as a problem-oriented analysis of individual factors such as low standard game development, consideration of children's interests and their social experience and differentiated work with boys and girls. The technology of implementing the individual differentiation approach is presented in the following stages:

Stage 1 – Diagnostics of the role-playing game standard for preschool children;

Stage 2 – Identifying drawbacks in game components development (plot, role acceptance and reflection, playing actions, role speech, role relationship, use of attributes);

Stage 3 – Identifying factors that cause insufficient development of role-playing game components (e. g. a low level of social playing experience, a high level of a child's anxiety and fear of starting interaction with peers, deviations from the playing activity organization method, etc.);

Stage 4 – Elaboration of a psychological and pedagogical playing activity guidance program by taking into account the diagnostics results.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Description of participants

The research was carried out in 2008-2012. The participants included teaching staff members and 98 children aged 6-7 from a preschool education institution.

3.2. Presentation of results

As a result of the program implementation the following positive changes in the role-playing game development can be stated: game contents were expanded; the children began to show creativity in game plots and playing actions; their role speech became more detailed. The children began to think about methods of plot implementation beforehand; they combined knowledge from different sources including the knowledge that had been acquired through virtual tours. It is important that the children began to coordinate the plot with their game partner through play models.

Children take active part in roles distribution, they try to act according to their role showing the experience acquired through mixed-age communication, e.g., in role distribution. Preschool children try to expand their playing group; they demonstrate autonomy and coordination of actions while creating an object-playing environment. The games became longer due to an increase in children's playing actions and also because of the fact that children learned to perform two or three roles alternatively reflecting a variety of social roles in real life.

4. Conclusion

To sum it up, the guidance of preschool children playing activity should be based on the principles of complexity, integrity and individualization.

As effective pedagogical conditions for senior preschool children playing activity development the following factors can be considered:

- Multimedia technologies implementation for preschool children's social playing experience enrichment;
- Organization of mixed-age communication for mutual enrichment of children's social playing experience and their playing skills development;

- Introduction of play materials and attributes into the object-playing environment to develop children's plot creation skills;
- The individual differentiation approach to role-playing game planning and direct guidance.

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